You Are Enough.

I think that's something we should all hear more often.

In a time like now, it can often be easy to doubt yourself or to believe that you are not ready for the future that is ahead of you. After all, what's next for many of us feels uncertain. Graduation, college, careers, relationships, and countless other decisions wait just beyond the horizon. As people, we naturally fear the unknown because we cannot always predict what comes next.

As we take these steps into the next chapters of our lives, it is a given that alongside what is known, they will be filled with the unknown, they will be filled with change, and they will be filled with surprises. Not knowing things can often be such an uncomfortable feeling for so many people. It is okay to feel uncomfortable. It is okay not to know. It is okay to not have everything figured out.

And when we inevitably find ourselves in these moments of uncertainty, it can be very easy to question ourselves. We wonder if we are doing enough, if we have done enough, or if we are where we are supposed to be. With such accessibility to other people's lives, it can be very easy to compare ourselves to those around us and diminish our achievements because of that. We see people around us receiving awards, reaching goals, and celebrating accomplishments, and sometimes we can begin to wonder if we are where we need to be.

From my own personal experience, I recall December when I auditioned for the PMEA district band and did not make it. I remember seeing friends from other schools who played the same instrument as I did and made it. I also remember feeling as if maybe I had been on the wrong path. Maybe what I had planned on going to college for was not the right thing. Obviously, I was wrong.

What I failed to realize at the time was that one setback cannot possibly define my entire character or my entire story. In no way could it ever determine where I was headed. Because I was hyperfixated on an arbitrary comparison to where other people were, I lost sight of my own progress.

Looking back now, I understand that one bad audition did not take away from my own potential, and a single moment of disappointment did not erase years of hard work and growth. I understand that it is okay to fail.

The truth is, every person sitting here today has walked a very different path to reach this moment. Every challenge we have individually overcome, each setback that has come our way, every individual moment of success earned, and every lesson we have learned has helped forge us into our own unique person. Because of this, there is not one single specific timeline that determines when or if we are successful. There is no specific finish line that we must cross before a specific time to be successful. Simply put, to be successful, we do not have to keep pace with the person who is right next to us, but we do need to continue moving forward on the path that we have chosen for ourselves.

In a year, many of the thoughts that occupy our minds today may seem so insignificant. Any worries, comparisons, or doubts that feel so important at this time will fade and be replaced with new opportunities and new life events. Things that seem so overwhelming right in this moment will become stories that we can tell to reflect just how far we have come. And when we look back on them, they will remind us that we have always been more capable than we may give ourselves credit for. So rather than lessening ourselves because of what we have yet to accomplish, we should celebrate everything that has brought us here and everything that we will

do. We should recognize the growth, perseverance, and determination that have carried us to this point.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to express my gratitude to all the wonderful teachers, administrators, bus drivers, security personnel, secretaries, janitors, and other support staff who helped create the most wonderful learning environment for our students and helped us succeed. To all the parents, friends, and family in the audience who were vital in the development of the class, thank you for everything that you have done. Further, I extend a thank you to all the people watching from home who couldn't make it today, whether that be because you live in Hong Kong, you had a wedding to attend, or any other reason; you are appreciated. I would also love to thank the fantastic music ensembles here today, LAW staging and sound, and Edwards Crew for helping to ensure that graduation is as great as it can be. And though he is going to hate me, I extend my most personal thank you to Mr. Edwards for always for all that you do for the schools and have done to ensure countless graduating classes have had amazing graduations and experiences at North. I personally thank my brother Shane, my parents, and Mr. Edwards for always having my back and supporting me in all my endeavors. Lastly, I thank you, my classmates, for providing me with memories of a lifetime that I will never forget. It has been my greatest honor and privilege to learn, grow, and laugh with such a wonderful and amazing group of people. You are all going to be amazing. Whatever comes next will be awesome.

I have the utmost confidence in the class that sits before me today. I know without a doubt that no matter what challenges come your way, you will not only make it through but also thrive. I fully believe that every one of you possesses the strength, talent, and resilience necessary to navigate whatever comes next. Just remember, although it can be uncomfortable and the future may be uncertain in many ways, I promise we can handle change. As I look into the

crowd, I can feel nothing but genuine excitement for all that the future holds for every one of us. Not because you are perfect, but because you are YOU. In the grand scheme of things, there will never be something more valuable than you being yourself.

You are enough.

You deserve to be happy.

You deserve to be proud.

You deserve to be loved.

You deserve to be here.

You deserve to be you.

So as we enter the years ahead of us, I hope you remember never to measure your worth by what you have yet to achieve. Measure it by the person you have become, the obstacles you have overcome, and all the many lives you have greatly benefited along your journey here. What you have accomplished by getting here today is amazing, and I am beyond proud of the amazing people that you have become and will continue to be.

Congratulations, Class of 2026 Graduates.

I love you all, and most importantly,

“You Are Enough.”